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Les Bulgares Parlent au Monde, issued by La Commission d'Aide aux Antifascistes de Bulgarie.

A DESCRIPTION OF CONCENTRATION CAMPS  
AND FORCED LABOR PRACTICES IN BULGARIA

## APPALLING CONDITIONS IN TWO CAMPS

Scores of concentration camps have been set up by the Communist regime throughout Bulgaria, such as Cucuyan [unidentified, probably misspelled], Bogdanov Dol, Nazarevo [unidentified], Bosna, Poruchik-Genevo [unidentified], and many others.

The following description applies to the first two of the above-mentioned camps, located near the important mining center of Pernik [now Dimitrovo]. The buildings consist of large wooden or sandstone barracks with two wings. The internees sleep in bunks 2 meters long and 40 centimeters wide, which must also hold all their belongings. Hygiene is actually nonexistent, due to the shortage of water, which in most of the camps has to be brought from a distant place and is insufficient even to allow a drink for every camp inmate. It is considered an exceptional privilege to wash one's underwear once a month, but only the most audacious can accomplish this feat so frequently or even once every 2 months. Medical assistance is given only by order, and the doctors are forbidden to authorize rest periods longer than those provided by the official rules which, at Cuciyan, amount to one percent.

As for food, the 600 grams of bread and one meal of soup authorized for the day are quite inadequate to provide the minimum number of calories necessary to sustain the human body. A few months ago, nothing except cabbage, the poorest food in Bulgaria, was cooked in the camps. The fat and sugar rations destined for the internees are appropriated by the guards. Kettles designed to hold food for 200-250 people are used to prepare food for 1,000, who have to work 15 hours a day in brick production.

The conditions in these two camps are particularly appalling, because as of 1 January 1947, all food or clothes parcels for the internees were prohibited.

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The work system, besides being extremely hard and strenuous, is connected with the most ferocious punishments. Both camps have reached a record in this regard; Cuciyan has been named the "Kiss of Death" camp, whereas Bogdanov Dol is known as the "Camp of the Shadows."

The anarchist internees of the camps have to suffer exceptionally cruel treatment. They frequently work on uninterrupted day and night schedules, and sometimes work 36 hours without rest. Work schedules of 12-16 hours are considered normal. Most of the men succumb to hunger and fatigue and die at the camp, in spite of the system of providing for their liberation during the last moments of life and thus establishing that they died at home.

Punishments are inhuman. Besides beatings, additional work, and long months of prison, the internees undergo the famous routine of "counting the stars." It consists of standing motionless in front of the guard during the entire night, and is often inflicted on 2, 3, 5, or 10 consecutive nights, while daily work must be continued as usual. This punishment is inflicted for the slightest reason; for example, one of the internees conducted a sick friend to his bed, another, an elderly anarchist, failed to stand up during the noon meal when one of his superiors entered the hall, and was sentenced to 10 nights of "star counting." Collective punishments are also inflicted on the entire group, barracks, or camp for the failure of one inmate. In addition, special disciplinary measures are inflicted on anarchists. For example, the entire anarchist collective was suspended and its foodstuffs confiscated; in September about 100 kilograms of food were confiscated from the anarchists.

The above description gives far from a complete picture of conditions in the camps. For example, two 14-year-old children were recently detained for more than 2 months in Cuciyan; about 20 Turkish boys 15-17 years old are still being detained in both camps, together with old people 60-70 years of age.

#### SLAVE LABOR DISGUISED AS "GUARANTEED EMPLOYMENT," "CULTURAL BRIGADES"

Under the Communist regime, the entire country of Bulgaria has been turned into a vast forced-labor camp. Men and women from 15 to 60 years of age are continually forced to work without pay. They are dispatched for "voluntary" assignments under any pretext, such as the New Year, the 1 May celebration, the anniversary of 9 September, the Trade Unions Congress, the next Party Congress, etc.

The genuine forced-labor camps are grouped into several categories; one is established for former Fascists, or all those who have not adjusted themselves to the exigencies of the new regime. Another type of camp exists for "idlers" or those revealed to be more or less open enemies of the regime; they are usually sentenced to 6 months of forced labor, and, after that, for another 6 months, and so on. Thousands of people are included in this category, as the "idler" classification is frequently applied to any person dismissed from work and unable to find another job, regardless of his trade or profession (physicians, engineers, teachers, skilled and unskilled workers, etc.). The constitution guarantees employment for everybody; therefore everybody has to work, even if his occupation is unproductive and unrelated to his skill and training.

Slave labor also exists in many other forms. Young people in schools and colleges and the entire city population are recruited into "work and cultural brigades," established by law and comprising the most heterogeneous assignments.

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The youth brigades are grouped into national, district, and local units. Every boy and girl is compelled to spend 45 days of his or her summer vacation in one of the first two types of brigades. There are no definite work periods in the local brigades, but assignments usually last one week. The Work and Culture Brigades encompass the entire population, especially in urban areas. Government communal, and other employees are recruited primarily, but wage earners, artisans, professional people, housewives, etc., are also recruited. Every citizen must be in possession of a brigade book in which his workdays are registered. Sundays and holidays must be devoted to work in the district or locality, or else the brigades are dispatched on trucks to rural areas to aid in agricultural campaigns.

Students in schools must register during the term for next summer's brigade work; registration is "voluntary," but failure to register entails barring from final examinations or even dismissal from school. Consequently, everybody is anxious to register, and in 1948 the plan providing for 250,000 young brigade members was allegedly fully completed. The "voluntary" principle is observed in the same way in all the other brigades, and all who fail to register are classified as "idlers" and deprived of their ration coupons.

Work in the brigades is not adapted to the skills and aptitudes of the members; therefore it is mostly only a waste of time and utterly unproductive. However, that is not a matter of concern, as the main objective lies in "re-education," which in Communist terminology means the subjugation of the free will and thought of the individual and his transformation into a docile member of the human herd. Young people are, to a certain degree, more easily adaptable for any kind of work, but the constant strenuous physical effort and the poor quality of the food available to all Bulgarians lower physical resistance among the younger generation. According to medical reports, a large percentage are actually suffering from various glandular diseases, and especially from tuberculosis.

Brigade work is paid for according to fixed rates established by the government for its enterprises; however, the wages are not handed directly to the members but are turned over to the supervisors or managers; as a result, the People's Youth Union (presumably the present Dimitrov Youth Association) and the Communist Party collect and keep all the money.

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